

West Hartford Substance Abuse Prevention Commission (SAPC)
Meeting Minutes
June 4, 2015

Attendees: Amal Ali, Jeff Bersin, Ines Eaton, Dan Jordan, Joe Kalache, Robin McHaelen, Jonathan Merritt, Leo Negron, Mary Painter, Pat Tyler, Mark Zydanowicz

Welcome / Introductions / Approve Minutes / Early Departures / Announcements/Refreshments

Jeff Bersin welcomed members and introductions were made. Members enjoyed refreshments to thank them for their service. Meeting minutes from the May meeting were approved. Jeff announced that Celebrate West Hartford will take place this weekend, and Lead by Example and the Bridge will have booths at the event. This was Pat Tyler's last SAPC meeting. Joanna Curry-Sartori from the Bridge will serve in the coordinator role beginning in September. Jeff thanked Pat for her sixteen years of service to the Commission.

Working with Transgender Youth – Robin McHaelen, True Colors

Robin shared that transgender is not just related to attractions but to gender, and that the ways youth define themselves can be a fluid process. During adolescence, young people are figuring out who they are and have various names for the groups to which they belong. She reported that lower elementary students are now changing their gender more than in the past. Gender messages for boys start early and as a result they can be harassed and be especially at risk. Substance abuse is high for LGBT youth. The #1 most protective factor is the response of their family when coming out. If the youth is rejected, there is a high correlation with all risk factors. A parent's initial response is rarely their final response since they experience many emotions. Families who have rigid rules around gender will struggle with these issues the most. Suicide risk for LGBT youth is 25-30% if they are rejected by their family; that percentage goes down to 8% if they are supported in their disclosure. 51% of transgender youth who do not having family support attempt suicide during adolescence and young adulthood. That number goes down to 26% if there is family support. Their experience is worse if they go through puberty before changing genders. When LGBT youth have support at home and school they report higher levels of connection and self-efficacy than "straight" youth. For some youth, gender confusion can be a phase. Toileting, clothing, and toy preferences are indicators of gender preference. Robin reported that if the youth is going through a phase, the phase will end, and that trying to change who they are only hurts them. It's helpful for parents to be comfortable with ambiguity while their child sorts out their gender. The True Colors mentoring program serves 100 DCF youth who were rejected by their families due to their gender identity and sexuality preferences. True Colors' website is www.ourtruecolors.org.

Adolescent Substance Use Resources – Ines Eaton & Mary Painter, DCF

DCF was charged with creating a plan to better manage behavioral health. As a result, they held focus groups and during those meeting attendees reported that there weren't enough substance abuse resources. As a result, DCF created the CT Connection brochure which lists CT adolescent substance abuse programs. Mary reported that Connecticut is a national leader in adolescent substance abuse treatment that includes home-based and community-based services. They shared that a youth does not need

to be DCF involved or have insurance to take advantage of any of the services in the brochure.

There was discussion about the limited detox services for youth in CT. Currently there is only one program in Connecticut – Newport Academy in Bethel – however it is expensive and insurance is not accepted. DCF has a special rate at Newport Academy for youth in their custody. Youth can be in this program for 3 months. There is also a detox program called Arms Acres in New York. Mary reported that there has been discussion about creating other detox programs in CT however there hasn't been enough of a demonstrated need. Rushford has a boys' residential substance abuse program and has not been able to reach over 50% capacity. In response to a question from Jeff Bersin about removing the child from a dangerous environment that might have led them down this path, Mary reported that sometimes youth can be exposed to additional substances and problems in residential programs. Home-based programs, on the other hand, take place in their natural environment, which can be beneficial.

Lead by Example – Summer Interns and Middle Schools Next Year – Dan Jordan and Amal Ali, ICR

Amal reported that Lead by Example will have a booth at Celebrate West Hartford which will include LBE henna tattoos; a large sign about LBE where young people can post ways they address stress in a positive manner; a prize wheel and related questions; and a survey for parents on parent/teen communication. If ICR receives their grant, they will have six summer interns – ideally 3 from Conard and 3 from Hall. The interns will work on a LBE campaign manual which will guide efforts throughout the year.

Dan Jordan reported that there was a good meeting with Marisa Tamayo of King Philip Middle School regarding bringing LBE to the middle schools. There is a good foundation at Sedgwick and they are hoping to connect with Bristow. Amal reported that a Newington school wants to bring Lead by Example to their school.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Tyler

June 5, 2015

